

**ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION  
American Legion Post 6, 212 S. Pleasant St, Prescott AZ 86303  
Saturday - August 4, 2007**

**M I N U T E S**

**Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order at 10:06 a.m. by Vice Chairman Yamanouchi as Chairman Dingwall was unable attend due to a scheduling conflict.

**Present**

Advisory Commissioners

Kenneth Yamanouchi  
Gary Fredericks  
Phillip Quochytewa  
Webb Ellis  
Tom Heaney  
Larry McKim  
Linda Fulkerson  
Bill Lunsford

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Lee Borgen, Vets' Benefit Counselor  
John Dudas, VBC III from Prescott office

**Opening** – Vice Chairman Yamanouchi thanked John Mortimer, Commander, American Legion Post 6 for hosting the meeting and provided a brief overview of purpose of the Advisory Commission. He then introduced the many dignitaries present and offered them the opportunity to make brief comments. Dignitaries included: Carol Springer, Yavapai County Supervisor, Tom Thurman, Yavapai County Supervisor, Diane Joens, Mayor of Cottonwood, Tom Rankin, Mayor of the Town of Florence, Tony Gioia, Mayor of Camp Verde, Harvey Skoog, Mayor of Prescott Valley, Rowle Simmons, Mayor of Prescott, Larry Tarkowshi, Manager for the Town of Prescott Valley, Mike Flannery, Council Member, Town of Prescott Valley, Mike Kanitsch, Secretary Treasurer, National Assoc. Northern Region Blind Veterans of America. Elizabeth Mascot, Constituent Service Representative for Senator Kyl's office and Don Packard, Congressional Liaison for Congressman Renzi's office.

Tom Rankin, Mayor of Florence, requested assistance with support services in Pinal County for GWOT returning veterans, their dependents and survivors. He also requested assistance/ideas for improving the ability to transport veterans to/from VA medical facilities.

Tony Gioia, Mayor of Camp Verde expressed concern and support for veterans "those who served us, it is our turn to serve them!"

Each Commissioner provided a brief bio.

**Minutes** - The minutes of July 12, 2007 were approved as distributed.  
(Fredericks moved and Heaney 2<sup>nd</sup>)

Vice Chairman Yamanouchi gave a brief overview of the agency's current status: Pat Chorpenning resigned his position as Agency Director and the Governor appointed Brigadier General Maxon as Interim Director. A nationwide search was conducted for a permanent Director and General Maxon was subsequently chosen as the new Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services. He has appointed new people to be the Financial Officer, head of Fiduciary and Head of the State Veterans' Home. He has created and staffed the position of Chaplain at the State Veteran Home. Mike Klier stays on as Deputy Director and Mike Fugate stays on as head of the Education

Department and State Approving Agency. We now have a good leadership team in place to carry forward the goals of the agency.

Comment from the floor: Gentleman stated that he is no friend of Pat Chorpenning, but he thinks that Pat was made a scapegoat because of the Walter Reed business. He got a raw deal.

Vice Chairman Yamanouchi gave a brief overview of the Advisory Commission meeting schedule and the purpose of the quarterly regional meetings. He emphasized that the regional meetings were an excellent source of information sharing and a vehicle for gaining knowledge of rural issues that are often very different from those in metropolitan areas.

Commissioner Fredericks expressed appreciation for the attendance of so many community leaders. He gave a brief overview and update on the Veterans' Services Division. He also provided the ground rules for the meeting; Comment/Question Request cards and advised that as a State Agency the Commission has no influence in Federal issues, although they will pass information along to the appropriate Federal offices.

Comment: Chandra Tenley spoke passionately on a program called "Honor Flight" that takes WWII veterans from around the country to see the WWII memorial. She passed out a 23 page handout describing the program. Honor Flight is a non-profit organization created to honor veterans for their sacrifices. They fly veterans, at not cost, to Washington DC to visit and reflect at "their" memorials. First priority is WWII veterans because their ranks are diminishing so rapidly. Subsequently the program will be extended to Korean, then Viet Nam vets. Local contact for more information is Chandra Tenley, (American Legion Auxiliary, Post 93) PO Box 2763, Camp Verde, AZ 86322, voice 928 567 3451. Information is also available at [www.honorflight.org](http://www.honorflight.org). She requested assistance in getting the word out to the veterans' community and groups who might be interested in supporting this effort.

Response: Commissioner Fredericks suggested UAV and the various veterans' organizations.

Question: Why doesn't TRIWEST have sharing agreements that would make TRICARE Prime available outside the 40 mile radius of military installations? TRICARE eligible people under 65 years old need better service in areas that are outside military catchment areas.

Response: Vice Chairman Yamanouchi advised that TRICARE is a Federal issue. The provision of health care services is very complicated with funding being the most important consideration.

Response: Commissioner Ellis observed that Medicare may be facing greater cuts in services and what is paid to Medicare providers. A reduction of Medicare services will have a negative impact TRICARE, not help expand TRICARE. He commented that we need Senator Kyl and Congressman Renzi to push for legislation to change the formula for funding Medicare over the long term. The short-term fixes are not solving the problem.

Question: Why can't the program for transporting patients to/from VAMC be properly funded. The local DAV asked the Town of Verde Valley for money to support additional vehicles, upkeep and maintenance for the DAV Volunteer Transportation Network van program.

Response: Commissioner Ellis advised that the Governor created a Veterans' Task Force last year and one of the topics of study was rural veterans' issues. A current follow up to the Task Force is the Arizona Veterans' Research Council. Transportation has been raised as a concern at every rural meeting and the Research Council is working on it. There are some 230 pieces of veteran related legislation currently pending at the Federal level; that includes at least a dozen pieces

relevant to rural veterans. When the Federal legislation is settled, the State will look carefully at the remaining gaps in service to rural veterans and see what Arizona can do to fill those gaps.

Comment: Mayor Gioia requested to be put on the mailing list for any legislative information relevant to rural veterans; tonygioia\_@msn.com.

Comment: The DAV transportation vans are aging. The program needs upgrading and funding.

Response: Commissioner Quochytewa advised that he sits on the Veterans' Research Council and that veteran transportation and veterans' services in general for rural areas is being actively looked at. Services in rural areas is a statewide problem.

Response: Vice Chairman Yamanouchi observed that vehicles is not the basic problem. The problem is insurance and maintenance. He gave a brief overview of how the DAV Volunteer Transportation network is set up in cooperation with the VA medical system.

Comment: The DAV transportation program does not work for veterans in Verde Valley. Verde Valley has obtained their own vans for veteran transportation, with support from city government and the American Legion.

Comment: Speaking of problems for veterans in the Verde Valley: Physicians have not been paid by Medicare since January 1, 2007 for their services to Medicare patients. Something needs to be done; sooner rather than later.

Comment: We need to know where to send people for help, particularly in rural areas.

Response: Commissioner Ellis advised that ADVS is putting together a Resource Directory to help people know where to go for what they need.

Question: The Native Americans have long wanted a cemetery within their sacred mountains. Why can't they get that? Why is current planning being done for a State cemetery in another area of Northern Arizona?

Response: Commissioner Quochytewa advised that the choice of Camp Navajo for the Northern Arizona State Cemetery came about based on extensive negotiations and significant funding issues.

Response: Commissioner Ellis added that if the Native Americans want a State Cemetery within their sacred mountain area, they need to start lobbying.

Question: Why aren't meetings like this one advertised on the ADVS website?

Response: Commissioner Fredericks agreed that they should be advertised on the website.

Question: When is Arizona going to give free education to National Guard veterans?

Response: Commissioner Ellis advised that education is another issue being actively looked at by the Veterans' Research Council. The War Orphans education bill was signed by the Governor. It is for the survivors of veterans who were Arizona residents and died in action. Education for National Guard personnel is administered by the Adjutant General's office. Work is currently in progress at the Federal level to address education benefits for Guard and Reserve personnel. At present we do not know what the education benefits for Guardsmen and Reservists will be. When the Federal

benefits are clarified, the Veterans' Research Council will consider how the State can augment and fill the gaps.

Question: Why does the State Veteran Home charge veterans for Adult Day Care? That should be free, the veterans have earned it.

Response: Commissioner Fredericks advised that by statute, when the State Veteran Home was built, it was required to be financially self-sufficient. It could not receive any State funding. This year the Arizona legislature obligated two to three million dollars to enhance the level of services available at the Home.

Response: Vice Chairman Yamanouchi advised we are hopeful that revenue generated from the sale of the new Freedom license plate will provide the additional funding needed to increase ADVS services to veterans. Seventeen dollars from each plate goes into the Veterans' Donation Fund. The growth of this fund will allow enhanced benefits.

Comment: It is time for the State of Arizona to step up and fund things for veterans!

Response: Commissioner Healey observed that our Governor is strongly supporting veterans. There are many programs in the planning stage. It takes time to research and implement; go after legislators to write and support bills. Everyone needs to be involved, the Commission, ADVS, Legislators, individual veterans and veterans' groups.

Question: Has consideration been given to implementing California type veterans' benefits in Arizona?

Response: Commissioner Ellis advised that the Veterans' Research Council is looking at veterans' benefits in every state to see what is already being done that may be appropriate for Arizona to adopt. Arizona can not do what California is doing; however, our goal is to reach a position where we (ADVS) will be completely independent of State funding. Wisconsin Department of Veterans' Affairs has achieved financial independence from the State, but it took them years to get there.

Comment: Arizona property tax for disabled veterans' doesn't work because it requires income below the poverty level. This needs to be fixed.

Response: Commissioner Fulkerson advised that this issue is being studied by the Veterans' Research Council. The Council has presented a proposal to have the property tax exemption based on the percent of disability rather than income.

Question: Why doesn't the Arizona Veterans' Donation Fund take direct credit card donations rather than forcing people to write checks? Most charities accept credit cards now. It is much easier and would increase participation.

Response: Commissioner Fredericks observed that was a very good suggestion.

Comment: Speaker expressed great appreciation for what veterans get now: the Cottonwood VA clinic is a wonderful help; VAMC Prescott gives excellent service; Yavapai College offers classes for veterans. Thank you for what we have now.

Response: Vice Chairman Yamanouchi thanked the speaker for her feedback.

Comment: American Legion Post 6 will ensure that all American flags put in local classrooms are made in the USA, not in China. He encouraged everyone to ensure that the flags they fly are made in America and not overseas. This is OUR flag!

Commissioner Fredericks reminded everyone that we have to be out of the hall by noon so that the Legion can serve lunch. He thanked everyone for coming and for the excellent participation.

Vice Chairman Yamanouchi again thanked American Legion Post 6 for their hospitality. He also expressed great appreciation for everyone attending and being such active participants. The dialogue is invaluable.

**Adjournment** - Vice Chairman Yamanouchi adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m. The next regular meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on September 13, 2007 at the State Veteran Home, 4141 North Third Street, Phoenix, Arizona.

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